

Archibald MacLeish wrote, "There are those who will say that the liberation of humanity, the freedom of man and mind, is nothing but a dream. They are right. It is the American dream." 9/11 was a nightmare. As horrific and cruel as it was, however, it can't extinguish the dream.

TRIBUTE TO DEBRA BROWN STEINBERG

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, the attacks of September 11, 2001, certainly had a profound impact on all Americans. In addition to the sadness, anger, fear, and, ultimately, resolve, we all felt in the aftermath of the attacks, many were also infused with a renewed sense of patriotism and fellowship that inspired them to engage in public and community service. As we approach the tenth anniversary of this terrible tragedy, I would like to honor one individual who answered the call to service, and who has done so much to help victims of the attack, Debra Brown Steinberg.

Debra was in New York City on September 11, and from her apartment she could see the smoke pouring out from the World Trade Center. As she desperately waited for news about her stepson, she made an agreement with God: if her stepson would come home safely, she would work to help the victims of the attack. Thankfully, her stepson did come home safely, and Debra has more than fulfilled her promise.

Utilizing her sharp legal acumen and more than 30 years of professional experience, Debra has become a passionate advocate for the families of those who perished in the 9/11 attacks. A partner in the respected New York firm Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP, Debra was integral in putting together a consortium of law firms that have worked together to deliver pro bono services to 9/11 families.

Early on, Debra realized that, if her firm was going to give victims the assistance they truly needed, they would have to do more than simply offer free legal advice. Under her direction, the consortium has taken a holistic approach toward assisting the families; not just offering counsel, but also seeking to ensure they receive the services they need, and lobbying lawmakers and regulators to ensure that all victims have access to the Victim Compensation Fund. Debra has also represented many victims' families, pro bono, before the fund to ensure that they are fairly compensated.

Perhaps Debra's most amazing work has been her advocacy on behalf of some of the most vulnerable victims of the attacks: immigrants who were in the country illegally when their relatives were killed during the attacks on the World Trade Center. These individuals, as the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has put it, "share with all Americans a moment of loss and pain and pride that is now a defin-

ing part of our national history." However, because of their status, they were forced to cope with their pain and sadness in isolation, afraid to seek assistance or to offer their help for fear of being found out. Our Nation cannot help but feel a deep connection and commitment to this group.

Debra has worked tirelessly to assure that we live up to this commitment and to enable these victims to participate in rebuilding after the attacks. With her guidance, 11 of these spouses and children of innocent victims of the attacks have provided assistance to the Federal Government in its 9/11 related investigations and prosecutions. Debra also successfully represented these families before the Victim Compensation Fund to ensure that they received equal consideration. Finally, she has fought doggedly to ensure that these families can continue to work and live in the United States. Due in great part to her work, these family members have so far been able to stay in the United States and their cases are now being considered for a temporary visa that would allow them to live and work legally in the United States. Let us all hope that DHS is able to quickly conduct its review so that these families can leave the shadows and rebuild their lives.

Over the years, my office has had the privilege of assisting Debra in her efforts, and I have witnessed firsthand her dedication to assisting the families of 9/11 victims. Those she has represented are certainly lucky to have had her on their side. Given all that Debra has done, it's no wonder that the American Bar Association honored her with the prestigious Pro Bono Publico award in 2006. She has also received the 9/11 Tribute Center Award in 2009 and the Ellis Island Medal of Honor in 2007. Her work has also been recognized several times by my colleagues here in the Senate, as well as in the U.S. House of Representatives and the New York State Legislature.

Mr. President, I commend Debra Brown Steinberg for her commitment to assisting families of 9/11 victims. Her efforts truly personify the American values of fairness and patriotism. The U.S. Senate, and the American People, owe her our sincerest gratitude.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

TEXAS WILDFIRES

Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, I rise in morning business to talk about a situation in Texas, the wildfires and the drought.

Since we were mostly home during the August recess, I saw the floods in the Midwest and on the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. I saw the hurricane that hit New York and all along the East Coast. At the same time, with all the extra water in the East, we have had as much as 60 days in parts of

Texas with no rain whatsoever. The drought is killing livestock. It is killing land. It is a sad situation. What has happened, of course, is, from that, the wildfires have been able to go farther than we have ever seen in Texas before.

Just in the past 7 days, the Texas Forest Service has responded to 176 fires, destroying nearly 130,000 acres. This year alone, over 2,000 fires have burned more than 2 million acres in Texas. We have high winds and drought conditions, which are a terrible combination in this instance.

Yesterday, the Texas Forest Service responded to 20 new fires, which consumed nearly 1,500 more acres. One of the hardest hit areas is Bastrop County, which is near Austin. I was talking to some of my constituents in Houston, which is not near Austin, and they were talking about seeing and smelling the smoke in Houston from these fires in Bastrop.

An assessment has been completed as of now that says 785 homes were completely destroyed, 238 homes have been reported lost as a result of other fires over the past 3 days, and the fires are so big that they are being photographed from space.

Senator CORNYN and I have asked the President to add the recent wildfires from just this last week to his previous disaster declaration from this spring, which did include wildfires. I want the people of Texas to know that Senator CORNYN and I are working together to get all the Federal help they need. I have been in contact with the State representatives from the area, the mayors, and the county judges to get the reports. So far they feel they have gotten the help they have needed. But now, in the aftermath, we will need to be part of any kind of disaster bill that goes through this Senate or is declared by the President.

It is my hope we can work through that next week and make sure we include these most recent fires along with the flood disaster relief that supposedly will come to the floor next week. So we are going to work on it and try to help these people. We can't replace the graduation pictures and the wedding pictures and the children's pictures that are lost. This is the human loss you see in this type of a situation. But we can certainly help these people rebuild, and that is what we want to do.

We are going to be on the job trying to help in every way we can, knowing there will not be a 100-percent replacement because the photographs and the personal items and grandmother's wedding ring may not be recovered, but we are going to do what we can, as Americans always do.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this afternoon, we held a hearing in the

Constitutional Subcommittee on the Senate Judiciary Committee on new voting laws that are being passed in many States. It was one of the first hearings on Capitol Hill on the subject, and I thank you very much for attending as a member of the subcommittee.

We had an array of witnesses, starting with Members of the Senate and Members of the House of Representatives, expressing various points of view on this issue. What we discussed was the new laws in States that are establishing new standards for voting in America. It is essential for us on this subcommittee, with our jurisdiction and responsibility, to focus on this issue of voting rights.

As has been said so many times, there is no more important right in America. The right to vote is a right people have given their lives for.

As we look at the checkered history of the United States, we find that though we honor the right to vote, from the very beginning, we have compromised that principle. We started off with requirements of property ownership. We didn't allow women to vote for so long. African Americans were not given that opportunity for decades. Over the years, we have had as many as 10 different constitutional amendments focusing on extending the right to vote.

When we get to the heart of a democracy, it is about voting. That is why these new State laws are so important and so important for us to reflect on.

Requiring a photo ID for most of us at this station in life or who are in business, it seems like a very common request. We present our IDs when we get on airplanes and in so many different places. But for a substantial percentage of Americans, they don't carry a government-issued ID. They live their lives without the need of one. Now State laws are requiring these IDs for people before they can vote. It sounds like a minor inconvenience, and for many people it would be just that. But for others, it could be more.

If there is not a good opportunity for a person to acquire an ID without cost, in a fashion that doesn't create hardship, many people will be discouraged from voting. They will just think: This is another obstacle in the path of exercising my right to vote, and maybe I will stay home.

That is not good for a democracy. We should be leaning in the other direction, trying to expand the electorate, expand the voting populous in this country, expand the voice of the voters in this country, not the opposite. Many of these State laws in the seven States that have now put in photo IDs create significant hardships.

We have a problem in Wisconsin, for example, and I have written to the Governor asking him to give me his impression of how he will deal with these issues.

One out of five people in Wisconsin do not have an ID; 177,000 elderly people in Wisconsin do not have the ID re-

quired by law; more than one-third of young people don't have an ID. Particularly among African Americans under the age of 24, 70 percent do not have the ID necessary to vote in Wisconsin. So, you say, they have their chance. The election will not be until next year, they have plenty of time.

It turns out that in the State of Wisconsin there is only one Division of Motor Vehicles Office that is open on a weekend in the entire State. That to me seems unconscionable and unacceptable. We need to take a hard look at this and the first stop will be the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice.

They asked me after the hearing today, what are we going to do next? They said what we will do next is follow the law. The law says the Department of Justice has to weigh each of these changes, whether it is voter registration in Florida or whether it is the voter ID or the limitation on early voting and decide whether this violates the basic standards of the Voting Rights Act. They have 60 days to do so after the law is enacted.

I have spoken to the division, Civil Rights Division. It is my impression they are going to move on this in a timely fashion. This is a critical issue. I am afraid it is way too political. The forces behind change in virtually every State—not every one but virtually every State—have come from the same political side of the equation. It is not lost on those of us who do this for a living what is at stake here. If certain people are denied access to the polls, discouraged to vote, and those people turn out to be historically those voting on one side or the other, it is going to create not only a personal hardship but a distortion in the election outcome and I hope we can sincerely work together on the Judiciary Committee and with the Department of Justice to resolve this.

TRIBUTE TO ANNE WALL

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I want to take a few minutes to thank a remarkable person on my staff who is moving to a new job. Anne Wall of Chicago is one of my most trusted staff members. She has been my Senate floor director for more than two years. A few C-SPAN viewers may recognize Anne as a regular on the floor of the Senate. Those of us who worked closely with her on both sides of the aisle know she is one of the smartest, hardest working, and most gracious members of the Senate community. No matter how early in the morning or late at night, Anne Wall is always there with a smile and a good answer. If an agreement needs to be worked out, Anne is there to offer a fair and constructive solution.

Next week Anne Wall starts an exciting new chapter in her life. My loss is the gain of a former Senator from Illinois, President Barack Obama. Anne is going to the White House to work as a

Special Assistant to the President. I am going to miss working with her, as everyone on my staff will. Fortunately, we are going to see her often on Capitol Hill in her new job, representing the President of the United States.

A little about her background will explain how Anne came to the Senate. Anne grew up in Palos Heights, in the south suburbs of Chicago. She is a first-generation suburbanite. Her dad Michael and mom Liz both grew up on the South Side of Chicago, which means that Anne has the South Side in her blood. In Chicago that is noteworthy.

However, when Anne was a kid, her family did something that was considered heretical. They had, as South Siders, season tickets to the Chicago Cubs. That made the Walls something of an anomaly among South Siders, and it probably helps explain why Anne is able to work so well across the aisle here in the Senate.

Politics was not discussed much in the Wall home, but Anne developed her own interest in politics at a very early age, at every level. In the eighth grade she became the first girl ever elected class president at St. Alexander Grade School. That same year, Anne Wall became the first girl in her town to serve as "Mayor for a Day" of Palos Heights. She won that honor on the strength of an essay she wrote.

Anne attended high school at one of the most remarkable South Side institutions, Mother McAuley—a terrific Catholic girls school which usually fields one of the best volleyball teams in the State. Anne went to the school run by the Sisters of Mercy, where she was elected president of the student council. It was in that South Side Chicago high school that Anne Wall started to go astray. While her colleagues and friends in high school were reading *Rolling Stone*, Anne Wall was reading *Roll Call*. Anne read *Roll Call*, not for its accounts of partisan fights, but because she wanted to know how government works. She wanted to understand the rules and the mechanics of Capitol Hill. As her mom said, "Who does that?"

I will tell you who: Anne did; someone who wanted to serve her Nation and understand how the government can be a force for good.

She earned a bachelor's degree from Miami of Ohio College, and went on to DePaul University Law School, where she was chosen to serve on the Law Review. In her final year at law school, Anne worked as an intern in the U.S. Attorney's Office in Chicago. After law school, she clerked for two distinguished jurists, Cook County Circuit Court Judge Allen Goldberg and Cook County Circuit Court Judge Lynn Egan, before signing on as associate counsel at a prestigious Chicago law firm and making a few bucks. But that wasn't where her heart was.

In 2006, Anne Wall decided to leave the world of private law and its comfortable compensation to come to Capitol Hill. She saved up money because